



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

LITERATURE.

AN EXAMINATION OF HÖFFDING'S THEORY OF RELIGION.

In his recent work on the Philosophy of Religion, Professor Höffding maintains the thesis that the essence of religion is a belief in the persistence of value. The indication of this thesis is not by any means the only purpose of the work, although it is a conspicuous feature of it. The present paper does not aim to review the work as a whole, but simply to examine the meaning and validity of this theory of the nature of religion.

That faith in the conservation of value constitutes the essence and ideal of all religion, is a proposition at once fascinating and baffling. It seems to bring religion at a stroke into line with physics and its doctrine of the conservation of energy. At the same time this very parallel makes the expression a difficult one to understand. Energy, from the point of view of the physicist, whatever the metaphysical may think of it, is an entity. It is clear enough what is meant, when the physicist tells us that the total quantity of energy remains constant under all changes of form. But we do not conceive of value as an entity. It is not a thing but a quality, and not even an objective quality at that, but the quality of certain things in their relation to beings possessed of an affective consciousness. In short, value is a ratio. What sense, then, can we attach to the phrase: conservation of value? We can best get at Professor Höffding's meaning if we look at some of the passages in which he uses it. The first preliminary statement of the theory is given in the introduction as follows: "If religious ideas have no value as knowledge, then the value which possibly they do possess, must consist in the fact that they bring to expression other sides of the soul's life than the intellectual. We must seek, then, a description of the religious life of the soul; particularly of the relation of the ideas to religious experience and religious feeling. In this way it will be shown that religion in its innermost nature has to do, not with the *understanding* of existence, but rather with the *valuation* of it, and that religious ideas express the relation in which actual existence, as we know it, stands to that which gives to life its highest worth for us. The kernel of religion, according to the hypothesis, to which we are impelled, is a belief in the persistence of value in the world (*ein Glaube an die Erhaltung des Wertes*). This belief appears in great representations of perceptual imagery in the popular religions, particularly in the highest of them. Likewise, in those men who stand outside every popular religion, such a belief as this can live even if it is not here set forth in definite form.

"The transition from the psychological side of religion to the ethical is brought about naturally by the question, what ethical value it has that the persistence of value is believed in. Ethics has to do with the production of values, and we cannot deny the possibility that the work of producing values leaves neither time nor strength to spend in thinking of their persistence." In another passage he says: "The religious problem is concerned not merely with the persistence of value in the human world. Not only a psychological, but also a cosmological question is presented—the question as to the relation to existence as a

whole of what appears to man of the highest worth. Is there a connection of values with the laws and forces of existence? Are, perhaps, even these laws and forces determined ultimately by the highest values? Or, perhaps, can we attribute to the concept of value no validity at all outside the sphere of human life?"

"The hypothesis which we shall later seek to establish," says Höfding, "rests upon this: that the principle of the persistence of value is the peculiar religious axiom which is expressed in various ways in the various religions and by the various religious standpoints." Again, he says, "If I undertake to show that the principle mentioned is the fundamental thought of all religion, this attempt will be none the less successful because it is manifest that no religion expresses the principle with clearness and consistency. It will suffice if an expressed need or expressed tendency to lay hold of this fundamental thought can be shown, so that the standard for estimating the worth of religions in their mutual relations, will be the degree in which they can express and carry out the principle. When the persistence of value is spoken of, it might be understood as if value did not disappear, but existence always contained value, whether it increases or decreases, or does both by turns. I take the expression persistence of value, however, in analogy with the expression persistence of energy, so that the principle asserts the continued persistence of value throughout all changes of form. It will therefore be necessary, perhaps, to distinguish between potential and actual value as we distinguish between potential and actual energy, and the one distinction is just as clear and appropriate as the other.

"The nature of a being determines its needs, and the needs determine what has value for it. Accordingly the religious axiom indicates the necessity that the character of a religion be determined by the nature and needs of its adherents. For one cannot believe in earnest in the persistence of value which he does not know in some measure from his own experience."

One of the first questions that naturally arise on considering this theory is: Does, then, a belief in the persistence of any sort of value constitute religion in Höfding's view? Is it some special kind of value, or is it value in general; value in the abstract that he means? That no determination of the nature of the value in question is given in the oft repeated formula, "Belief in the persistence of value," is indeed, confusing. In the course of the exposition, however, we find religious values differentiated from the other values in two ways. In the first place it is a belief in the persistence of the *highest* values which makes religion. It is not, however, the highest in any ideal or absolute sense, but simply the highest for us, and this is, perhaps, why Höfding does not put in the term highest in his formal statement of the principle. The Greek and the Greenlander may each have religion, according as he believes in the persistence of the value which is to him the highest, although the thing of highest worth may be eternal beauty for the one, and unlimited blubber for the other. Religion presupposes that man has some experience of value. The content of religion is always dependent upon man's experience, in particular the experience of what he has found worthful. "The values," Höfding says, "in whose persistence man believes, will be those which are to him the highest." And so the various religions may present the greatest differences, and yet each in its own way express a faith in the persistence of value. The opposition between the lower and the higher religion is of the greatest weight practically, but theoretically they are all the same. Lower and higher alike express in some measure the characteristic religious axiom—belief in the persistence of value.

Again, religious values have a certain derivative or secondary character as compared with other values, the primary values. Among our direct or primary values Höfding distinguishes two groups. One group of these values goes along with self assertion from its most elementary up to its most ideal forms. The other group of values is connected with devotion to beings, relations, and tasks, which reach out beyond the conditions of isolated self-assertion. To this second group belong the ethical, æsthetic, and intellectual feelings. Religion depends upon the existence of a third group of values, indirect or secondary values, which depend upon the values of the first two groups. The values of the third group spring from our interest in winning and preserving in existence the primary values. Existence appears to men as a battlefield on which the fate of values is decided. Existence is a great drama in which man is at once both a player and a spectator. Were he only a player, his entire energy and interest would be absorbed in his own part in the play. He would have no time or strength for, or interest in, the course of the drama as a whole. Were he, on the other hand, only spectator, his attitude would be purely intellectual or æsthetic. But if he is both, he will have values himself which are in conflict with the play. Besides his participation in it, the picture, also, which he forms of the course of the drama, will influence him and determine his attitude. He will feel himself drawn into the great order and stream of things with his entire inmost being, and for the sake of the highest values known to him, so that there will arise in him a most lively feeling of pleasure, or pain. In its immediate form this feeling discharges itself in utterances of hope and fear, of admiration and honor, of joy and sorrow. Such utterances are in all fields the simplest judgments of value that there are. "This feeling determined by the fate of values in the struggle for existence," says Höfding, "is the religious feeling." This feeling, accordingly, is determined by the relation of value to reality. This relation, as it appears to man, determines the value which man ascribes to existence. Accordingly, the religious judgments are secondary judgments of value. In comparison with the primary judgments of value, by which the first two groups of values are expressed, they are derived. So much for the differentiation of the religious values from the other values. Another question of paramount interest in considering any proposed theory as to the nature of religion is: How does the theory in view square with the actual form which religion has taken in history? Höfding submits to a careful and somewhat extended analysis the typical manifestations of the religious consciousness. He finds in all his religious axiom present implicitly if not explicitly. Indeed, the axiom is rather an unconscious ideal which each embodies in its own way and in greater or less measure. As we breathe without knowing the physiological laws of respiration, as the common consciousness acts in accordance with the laws of the association of ideas without knowing them, so the religious consciousness unconsciously manifests the principle of faith in the persistence of value. While all manifest, or at least tend to manifest this principle in some degree, no actual religion expresses it in its ideal form. "For the complete carrying out and verification of the belief in the persistence of value," says Höfding, "it would be required that nothing should occur in the world process as mere means or mere possibility, to say nothing of a sheer hinderance, that, on the contrary, whatever possesses immediate value should have always at the same time immediate value, and that all hinderances should, at the same time, be means also." Höfding frankly states that no actual religion realizes the principle in this ideal form; one wonders if he is acquainted with Christian Science. One of the two fundamental syllogisms on which Mrs. Eddy builds her

system is, "God is all—God is good, therefore, all is good and there is no evil." This would seem to afford an almost perfect realization of Höfding's principle in the ideal form. Höfding shows a most extensive knowledge of the historical manifestations of religion, and of the biographies of the great religious personages. One wonders at times, however, how his views might be affected if he were to become equally familiar with the varied and abundant florescence of the religious consciousness on the free soil of America. In spite of the optimism of the principle of the persistence of value in its ideal form, Höfding admits that it does not escape the difficulty of the problem of evil. For even if it be granted that all hinderances and all opposition were necessary means to the development and preservation of the worthful, still the question would arise why any means at all should be requisite, why the worthful should not be and prevail immediately, why there should be any difference or strife between value and reality?

It might appear as if the hypothesis of the persistence of value would be quite inconsistent with any pessimistic form of religion, but such, Höfding argues, is not the case. The pessimist must admit that there is something of worth in the world, but that it is to be won only by hard fighting and unavoidable suffering. He fixes his attention, before everything else, on the struggle and suffering, but still he necessarily has a belief in the possibility that the worthful can be secured by persistent fighting and suffering. No religion and no philosophy maintains an absolute pessimism. Buddha points to the possibility of attaining nirvana which is not at all to be identified with annihilation. Schopenhauer sees escape from disharmony in artistic and scientific activity, in sympathy and religious asceticism. An absolute pessimism would be valid only for those beings which some religions damn to eternal pain. But this eternal pain is not the entire content in any religion. The effort is always made to show that the highest values are to be attained not only in spite of, but even because of the eternal pain in some part of existence. The complete opposite of all religion would be neither optimism nor pessimism, but, on the contrary, neutralism; the view of things, according to which all valuation beyond the field of human conduct falls away, and man regards the course of the great world process only as a spectator, feeling himself convinced of absolute indifference towards all that men call worth. But such indifference is, perhaps, more theoretical than possible. Even the mere spectator would feel some intellectual, even if no ethical interest. It would endow existence with some value that it gives joy to his own understanding or contemplation, and his view of the world would be colored involuntarily by the progress or retrogression of such intellectual and æsthetic values.

In this brief survey of Höfding's Theory of Religion, I have endeavored, by means of quotation and paraphrase, to let the theory speak for itself. Time permits only a brief indication of the criticisms that might be offered. In the first place, the analogy suggested between conservation of value and conservation of energy, seems somewhat too far fetched. It may be possible, however, to attach some meaning to this analogy, even though value be a ratio, and energy an entity. A ratio may be conceived as constant even though the objects related are constantly undergoing change. The analogy is helped out by noting the existence of potential values [the pause in music is instanced as an example of a potential value], and the analogy is carried further by noting the transformation which values undergo—as, for example, it frequently occurs that a value which is first mediate comes in time to be immediate. But when we come to the quantitative aspect which plays so important a part in the doctrine of the conservatism of energy, the analogy seems to break down altogether.

The notion of a quantum of value in the universe, and the permanent conservatism of that quantum is wholly elusive. The notion takes form at all only by hypostalising value. Again, we may question whether the principle of the conservation of value offers anything distinctive of religion. We may admit Höffding's success in showing that all religions involve this element, but does not all intellectual effort in whatever sphere, involve a faith in the continuance of values, and involve some sort of conception of the relation between value and reality in the realm of experience, as well as in the transcendental realm?

A belief in the maintenance of empirical values cannot constitute religion. It is only when our faith carries us into the transcendental realm, or, if you please, when we consider the relation of value or of ourselves to reality as a whole, that we come into the religious attitude. Again, granting that a faith in the persistence of value is a universal aspect of religion, we may still ask whether, after all, it can properly be regarded as the *essence* of religion. It seems to me there is a confusion here of effect with cause, or, so to speak, of attribute with substance. Tiele has pointed out, on the basis of his studies in the science and history of religion, that the characteristic of religion subjectively is adoration. Recall, now, Matthew Arnold's formula for the objective side of religion, "The power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." Combining these two we may say religion is our adoration of the "Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness." Undoubtedly, one outcome of such adoration is faith in the persistence of moral worth, but this confidence is rather a product of religion than religion itself. Again, Höffding's hypothesis fails to account for the moral dynamic in religion. Such a view might answer for certain quiescent, mystical, contemplative forms of religion. But it fails utterly to account for the moral force so characteristic of the active types of religion.

Such a view, further, fails to give religion its place with respect to the other aspects of our spiritual life. Just as, theoretically, God is the principle of unity in the world, so, practically, religion should be the principle of unity in life. We must appeal to our transcendent interest to preserve the proper balance in our several empirical interests. Or, as we may state it, if religion is to be of any value, it must set a criterion for values. In answer to a similar criticism which I made in the review of the work published last March, in the *Philosophical Review*, Professor Höffding, in a private letter, urges his view that it is ethics whose business it is to furnish a standard of values. But while ethics may properly afford the standard for appraising the value of conduct, we must call upon religion for the standard by which to appraise the relative worth of our several types of values themselves, such as the sensuous, the intellectual, the æsthetic, and the moral. Which of the various kinds of value possible to us shall we seek to realize, and in what proportion? To this practical question, where religion, if anywhere, ought to give us help, a belief in the conservation of value seems to be of no service. If all influence in practical life is to be denied to religion (and this is, perhaps, just what Höffding means to say), then religion is reduced to a merely subjective attitude of the æsthetic type toward reality as a whole. This view is borne out by the view of the future development of religion which Höffding founds upon his theory of its essence. Religion, he thinks, is to become more and more a form of poetic symbolism.

In conclusion, I will call attention to what seems to me one manifest excellence in Höffding's theory. There are two directions in which one may look to find the essence of any group of phenomena that constitute a progressive series. One way is to eliminate all the differ-

ences and seek the common element that is left. This is Herbert Spencer's method by which he finds the essence of religion to consist in a recognition of the inscrutable mystery of things. The second way seeks the essence in the idea that is successively, progressively, but perhaps never completely manifested in the series. The first method attempts to explain the higher by the lower—the second method finds the explanation of the lower only in the higher. The first seeks an elemental essence; the second, an ideal essence. The first might be denominated the logical method; the second, the biological method. It is a pre-eminent merit in Höffding's work that he has adopted the second method. Whatever may be the final estimate of his hypothesis, he is worthy of great credit for his effort to determine the ideal essence of the religious consciousness.

F. C. FRENCH,
University of Nebraska.

Lincoln, Nebraska.

Hereditry and Social Progress, by SIMON N. PATTEN. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1903. pp. vii, 214. \$1.25.

Modern thought accepts the seeming paradox that evolutionary progress owes its origin to adverse conditions of environment. Thus, current biology and economics hold that the moulding factors of evolution are operative chiefly under conditions which are unfavorable to the life of the organism. And current religion teaches that morality thrives in adversity and decays in prosperity. Professor Patten maintains that this conception is fundamentally false. The main argument of his book supports the counter thesis: Progress starts from a surplus, not from a deficit. The acquired characters of one environment create a surplus of energy which evokes new characters; these in turn impel their possessors to seek another environment, in which the maximal benefit of the improved equipment may be reaped.

But how are the new characters evoked? And how do they become permanent possessions of the race? The accumulated surplus is made up of perishable goods only. To make progress secure, this temporary surplus must be transformed into permanent conditions or into mental traits. If such a transformation is impossible, progress can never be more than merely temporary. If it is possible, not only will a permanent progress be assured, but the process of the transformation must portray the course of social progress.

Professor Patten finds that the transformation actually does take place, and in the following manner. The successful artisan provides more food, leisure and protection for his children. Brought up under these conditions, the children acquire greater vitality, increased energy and a fuller development of their natural qualities. The new characters thus acquired beget a disinclination to the humdrum occupation of the father. New environments and new occupations are sought, in which the acquired characters may be utilized. The children become physicians, lawyers and clergymen; and move into a higher class in the social scale.

The essential point, then, in all social progress is the creation of a social surplus. This surplus is not permanent in form but is constantly in circuit, both biologically and economically, always disappearing but ever reappearing in new form. Its successive phases recur in the following order: First there is produced a surplus of energy through the employment of acquired characters; this surplus is next expressed in secondary characters; then a use is discovered for these secondary characters, in which the whole species can share; and finally the species moves into a new environment where the secondary characters are necessary.

The characters acquired by an individual or a generation, are not transmitted directly to its descendants. They gradually become in-